

MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS
HUNTING SEASON / QUOTA CHANGE SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Species: Deer
Region: 5
Hunting District: 502
Year: 2019

1. Describe the proposed season / quotas changes and provide a summary of prior history (i.e., prior history of permits, season types, etc.).

CWD was detected in this hunting district and adjacent HD 510 during the 2017 hunting season. Long term CWD management, as described in the Montana CWD Management Plan, is aimed at maintaining low densities of deer and low buck/doe ratios in hunting districts with CWD and adjacent hunting districts. The following season proposal is designed to meet these two broad objectives for HD 502.

This proposal changes the general mule deer season from buck only to either sex

Change From:

502: General License

Sep 07 – Oct 20 Antlered Buck Mule Deer. Archery Season Only
Either-sex White-tailed Deer. Archery Season Only
Oct 26 – Dec 01 Antlered Buck Mule Deer
Either-sex White-tailed Deer.

Change To:

502: General License

Sep 07 – Oct 20 Either-sex Mule Deer. Archery Season Only
Either-sex White-tailed Deer. Archery Season Only
Oct 26 – Dec 01 Either-sex Mule Deer
Either-sex White-tailed Deer.

Table 1. Hunter and harvest statistics for mule deer B license holders for H.D. 502, 2007 – 2018.

Year	Season Type	B License Number	Harvest		B License Harvest
			Bucks	Antlerless	Antlerless
2007	Either Sex	200	551	287	99
2008	Either Sex	300	600	367	172
2009	Either Sex	300	510	386	167
2010	Either Sex	300	425	321	135
2011	Either Sex	300	353	348	140
2012	Either Sex	50	402	212	24
2013	Either Sex	50	306	205	22
2014	Antlered Buck	0	369	3	0
2015	Antlered Buck	0	468	6	0
2016	Antlered Buck	25	518	40	7
2017	Antlered Buck	25	515	18	8
2018	Antlered Buck	150	NA	NA	NA

2. What is the objective of this proposed change? This could be a specific harvest amount or resulting population level or number of game damage complaints, etc.

This season change proposal is in direct response to the detection of CWD in adjacent HD 510 in 2017 and follows the guidelines established in the **Montana CWD Management Plan**. In response to the CWD threat the objective of the season change is to increase the harvest of antlerless mule deer in this

HD to at least 200 animals and reduce or stabilize the number of deer on the Dry Creek trend area in the southern portion of the hunting district.

The southern portion of HD 502 lies immediately adjacent to a portion of HD 510 where mule and white-tailed deer were found to have CWD. Implementation of this proposal is necessary to help alleviate some of the developing game damage issues as well as beginning to address the CWD threat. This season proposal is designed to stabilize or slightly reduce the mule deer population especially in the area close to the CWD endemic area. Maintaining lower densities of mule deer is thought to be the best preventative measure to control the spread of CWD.

3. What is the objective of this proposed change? This could be a specific harvest amount or resulting population level or number of game damage complaints, etc.

The objective of the season change is to increase the harvest of antlerless mule deer in this HD. Mule deer doe harvest will increase by 200 to 250 animals in the 2019 hunting season. This increase in antlerless harvest should result reduced spring counts on the Dry Creek trend area where the goal will be to maintain the recruitment counts at less than 600 mule deer in the long term.

4. How will the success of this proposal be measured? This could be annual game or harvest surveys, game damage complaints, etc.

Antlerless mule deer harvest will be monitored through the statewide harvest questionnaire survey. Deer numbers and buck/doe ratios on the Dry Creek trend area will be monitored through annual post season and spring helicopter surveys.

5. What is the current population's status in relation to the management objectives? (i.e., state management objectives from management plan if applicable; provide current and prior years of population survey, harvest, or other pertinent information).

Currently the mule deer population on the Dry Creek trend area is 31% below the long term average with fawn recruitment in 2018 of 14 fawns/100 adults.

Table 2. Counts and classification of mule deer on the Dry Creek-Bear Creek trend area, hunting district 502, 1982 to 2018.

Date	Ad.	Fawns	Unc.	Total	Fawns/ 100 Ad	Incre- ment	Remarks
3/22/82	86	58	-	144	67	40	Fixed-wing
4/08/83	151	91	-	242	60	38	Helicopter
4/17/84	275	155	-	430	56	36	Helicopter
4/11/85	514	249	53	816	48	33	Helicopter
4/03/86	455	208	-	663	46	31	Helicopter
4/07/87	452	243	-	695	54	35	Helicopter
4/08/88	263	162	-	425	61	38	Partial Helicopter
4/10/89	217	128	324	669	59	37	Helicopter
4/17/90	246	109	263	618	44	31	Helicopter
4/03/91	491	249	153	893	51	33	Helicopter ¹
4/15/92	191	90	616	897	47	32	Helicopter ²
4/25/93	378	152	175	705	40	29	Helicopter
4/11/94	417	132	86	635	32	24	Helicopter
4/12/95	412	98	73	583	23	19	Helicopter
4/22/96	558	130	-	688	23	19	Helicopter
4/18/97	371	65	-	436	18	15	Helicopter
4/10/98	467	159	8	634	34	25	Helicopter
3/24/99	362	178	-	540	49	33	Helicopter
3/27/00	482	269	22	773	56	36	Helicopter
4/03/01	473	243	--	716	51	34	Helicopter
4/25/02	434	187	15	636	43	29	Helicopter
4/24/03	328	90	--	418	27	22	Helicopter
3/23/04	497	132	--	629	27	21	Helicopter
4/02/05	479	159	33	671	33	25	Helicopter
4/07/06	658	195	3	856	30	23	Helicopter
4/08/06				690			Helicopter
4/11/06				613			Helicopter
3/26/07	627	116	--	743	18	16	Helicopter
4/03/08	765	159	--	924	21	17	Helicopter
4/27/09	470	82	--	552	17	15	Helicopter
3/24/10	550	77	--	627	14	12	Helicopter
4/16/11	557	76	--	633	14	12	Helicopter
3/29/12	296	90	5	391	30	23	Helicopter
3/28/13	269	82	--	351	30	23	Helicopter
4/24/14	215	50	--	265	23	18	Helicopter
3/19/15	198	64	--	262	32	24	Helicopter
3/20/16	217	75	--	292	35	26	Helicopter
3/22/17	190	62	--	252	33	25	Helicopter
4/16/18	364	52	--	416	14	12	Helicopter

6. Provide information related to any weather/habitat factors that have relevance to this change (i.e., habitat security, hunter access, vegetation surveys, weather index, snow conditions, and temperature / precipitation information).

1) Utilization transect information: None

- 2) Snow condition survey information: Winter weather conditions were severe in 2017/18 resulting in low fawn recruitment
- 3) Describe access problems related to change, etc.
Not all landowners recognize the threat of CWD so this proposal will meet resistance among some. On the other hand other landowners will welcome increased opportunity to manage mule deer populations on their property.
- 4) Overwinter survival information (i.e. bad winter lost what % of population)
During the severe winter of 2017-18 overwinter fawn mortality was in excess of 60% and adult doe mortality could have been as high as 15%.

7. Provide information relative to impacts to resident hunters, nonresident hunters and public & private land use.

Briefly describe the contacts you have made with individual sportsmen or landowners, public groups or organizations regarding this proposal and indicate their comments (both pro and con).

- 1) List specific sports groups or landowners:
A number of landowners in the Belfry area near the CWD endemic zone have been apprised of this recommendation (Sunlight Ranch, Papez Ranch, ♦T- Ranch, Spaulding Ranch)
- 2) Indicate if proposal was recommended by public - is it in response to a concern by sportspersons: The proposal is in response to the hunting season recommendations provided in the CWD management plan.

Submitted by: Shawn T. Stewart

Date: 10/15/2018

Approved: _____
Regional Supervisor / Date

Disapproved / Modified by: _____
Name / Date

Reason for Modification: